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Honorary Degree Citation: Vivian Gussin Paley

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Vivian Gussin Paley

Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa

Vivian Gussin Paley's life's work celebrates children – the way they think, the way they behave, and the way they learn. The research and the teaching techniques she developed have helped innumerable young children and the educators who teach them. She has dedicated her life to the healthy academic development of young children.

Gussin Paley is one of the nation's experts on the education and enrichment of very young children. Her most lasting contributions can be seen in the youngsters who left the classroom eager for more — more learning, more stories, and more experiences. She taught both students and teachers that stories, creativity, communication, and imagination all have a place in the classroom. She taught that drawings, play, and ingenuity have value. She taught that children should be allowed to be children and that harnessing the natural energy of young students can lead to real, lasting learning. She taught that the social growth of students should not be an afterthought.

Gussin Paley has spent years investigating the world of young children; examining their stories, creativity, communication, and interaction. Her work in early childhood education influences how teachers are trained and how children are taught nationwide. Her thirteen books guide educators to make better choices for their students.

Throughout her teaching career, in New Orleans, New York, and Chicago, Gussin Paley saw how the healthy development of children – their innovation and conceptual thinking – is frequently stymied by the strict curriculum of their educational systems. She also observed how nurturing a child's imagination in an environment rich in multiculturalism and based on fairness can lead to an effective education. She not only saw problems, she saw solutions.

The list of her recognitions and achievements is lengthy and includes the Harvard University Press Virginia and Warren Stone Prize for *The Girl with the Brown Crayon* (1998) and the NCTE David H. Russell Award for Distinguished Research in the Teaching of English (1999).

She was recently named Outstanding Educator in the Language Arts by the National Council of Teacher in English. Gussin Paley is the only kindergarten teacher to receive a MacArthur Fellowship (a Genius Grant).

For her lifelong commitment to excellence in education and her unwavering belief in the ability of children to both play and learn, the Board of Trustees is proud to award educator and author Vivian Gussin Paley the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, and to welcome her to our community of involved and engaged scholars.

